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Young People Learning for Activism in Victoria

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Anti-Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005: what does it mean for young people?

The news has been dominated recently with debates about terrorism in Australia and new laws are being developed to address the threat of terrorism.

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee has recently held an inquiry into the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005 and is due to report by 28 November 2005. This article provides a brief background to the legislation and highlights the potential impact of the laws for young people.



Background

Before September 11, there were various Australian laws related to terrorism but no anti-terrorism legislation as such. Since 2002, Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments have introduced a range of legislative provisions related to terrorism. On 8 September 2005, in the wake of the London bombings, the Government announced proposed changes to Australia's counter-terrorism laws. A Bill has been drafted which is now the subject of the Senate Inquiry. Key features of the Bill include:

1. Introduction of a 'control order' regime to monitor terrorist suspects. The obligations, prohibitions and restrictions that the court may impose include (but are not limited to):

- a prohibition or restriction on the person being at specified areas or places
- a requirement that the person remain at specified premises between specified times each day, or on specified days
- a requirement that the person wear a tracking device
- a prohibition or restriction on the person communicating or associating with specified individuals

- a prohibition or restriction on the person accessing or using specified forms of telecommunication (including the Internet)

Control orders cannot be imposed on people under the age of 16 and the maximum duration of an order is three months (as compared to up to 12 months for adults) although there is nothing to stop the making of successive control orders.

2. A new police preventative detention regime to allow detention without charge if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the person will engage in a terrorist act. Preventative detention may last no longer than 48 hours in total but may extend to 14 days through orders made under State and Territory laws. The time maximums are the same for adults and 16 and 17 year olds. Preventative detention orders cannot be made in relation to a person who is under 16 years of age. 16 and 17 years olds can have monitored contact with parents or guardians for 2 hours each day.

3. Questioning, search and seize powers. A police officer may stop and detain a person for the purpose of conducting a search for terrorism related items. Terrorism related items are broadly defined as involving something that the police officer reasonably suspects may be used in

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YACVic has moved to: Level 2, 172 Flinders Street, Melbourne 3000 Ph: 9267 3799 Fax: 9639 1622

This issue...

This December edition of Yikes! is HUGE. Lots of articles covering a HUGE range of subjects from **young carers** to **homophobia**, to **problem gambling**, **young driver safety**, the **anti-terror legislation**, young women and the **work gender-gap** and activism. We have reviews of plays and opinions on the Youth Roundtable and on discrimination as well as regular features like our policy page and state government news. If you'd like to meet the new board, the new YRG and the new PAG, why don't you turn the page and start reading our HUGE issue NOW!!...

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ABOUT YACVIC

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc. (YACVic) is the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria.

The main function of YACVic is to make representations to government and serve as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people and organisations that provide direct services to young people. YACVic's resources are primarily directed towards policy analysis and development through consultation with its constituency. YACVic also resources the information needs of its members through regular updates and by facilitating networking within and beyond the Victorian youth sector.

YACVic is governed by a volunteer Board and managed by a paid secretariat. The Council's core funding comes from the Victorian Government's Office for Youth.

YIKES!

Yikes! is YACVic's regular newsletter. The views and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of YACVic. This publication is copyright, articles may be reproduced with permission from YACVic.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to Yikes! are welcome. The deadline for the next edition of Yikes! is 20 January 2006

INSERTS & ADVERTISING

If you wish to include an insert or advert in Yikes please contact the YACVic Communications Officer on (03) 9267 3799 or email info@yacvic.org.au.

Editorial

Our last YIKES! for the year, as our page 5 article attests, 2005 has been a full and challenging year for YACVic. In recent months we have focused on relocating our office and bringing together our new Board, Youth Reference Group and Policy Advisory Group, see page 8 for more info on these newly appointed groups.

The Office relocation has all gone very smoothly and we are happily settled in our new home at level 2 172 Flinders St. We are right opposite Federation Square, which can be quite distracting given the level of activity that goes on over there.

Our new office provides quite a bit more space for us, which allows for our new program areas, both VIYAC and the yet to be named disability advocacy service for young people. It also provides for further program expansion if we need it in the future. Probably of more interest to you is that we now have two meeting room spaces. One is a small space that sits eight people around an oval table. The other is a larger space that can sit up to 14 around a table or about 35 in lecture style seating. Both rooms can be booked at no cost through calling Larissa on 9267 3799 or by emailing info@yacvic.org.au.

To celebrate our new space and the end to a very busy year, YACVic is having an open afternoon and Christmas drinks on Thursday December 8 between 3 and 6pm. Please come and join us for a tour of our new home and something to eat and drink. There's no need to RSVP, just turn up.

Included in this YIKES! mail out is a copy of our major piece of research for 2005, Snapshots from the Edge a report that details young people's and workers with young people's experiences of living and working on Melbourne's urban fringe. This report has already been picked up and featured in The Age and several other Leader newspapers as the issues raised in it are of great concern not just to those living and working on the fringe, but to all of us.

Hot on the heels of this issue of Yikes! members should look out for a copy of our annual report for 2004/05 and the YACVic Strategic Plan 2005-2008 that was launched by the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, Jacinta Allan at our AGM recently. The Strategic Plan represents 12 months of work in consulting with our members and other key stakeholders and devising a way forward for our organisation over the next three years. I'm very proud of the work we have done in developing the Strategic Plan and look forward to the challenge of implementing, monitoring and reporting on it in the coming years. These will be in the post in the next week or so.

Finally, YACVic will be closing over the Christmas period from December 22 to January 2. We will re-open on January 3. On behalf of the Board, volunteers and staff at YACVic I wish all of our members and supporters a very happy and safe festive season, and no matter how you celebrate, I hope it is a joyous, restful and restorative break for you.

See you in 2006!



Georgie Ferrari
Executive Officer
gferrari@yacvic.org.au

Anti-Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005: what does it mean for young people?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1... a serious offence or a terrorist act, or is connected with the preparation of a serious offence or is evidence of, or relating to, a serious offence.

Community concerns

There has been very little time for the community to respond formally to the Inquiry. Youthlaw and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) worked in partnership with The Hon. Alastair Nicholson, Department of Criminology, University of Melbourne, Mr John Tobin, Law School, University of Melbourne and Danny Sandor, Defence for Children International - Australia, to highlight the impact of the laws on children and young people. The submission focuses on where the Bill breaches Australia's international human rights treaty obligations. Youthlaw and CMYI also contributed a 'real-life' analysis of the Bill to consider the broader context in which the laws operate. The following provides a snapshot of the key issues raised in our submission.

Targeting young people

Young people already voice concerns about being targeted by police and their relationship with police is often strained. There is concern that the proposed legislation could lead to further tensions between police and young people if there is not adequate oversight of the use of these powers. Of particular concern are the proposed police powers to stop, question and search people in relation to terrorist acts. Young people may be disproportionately affected by these powers, particularly given they are significant users of and highly visible in public space. There are not sufficient safeguards in place to ensure these powers are not used inappropriately or that they target particular groups of young people.

Fear, discrimination and alienation

Of key concern is the indirect impact of the legislation namely increasing fear and racial discrimination in the community and in turn further alienating and isolating young people. The increase in racial discrimination after September 11 was evidenced in a recent report published by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Isma - Listen: National Consultations on eliminating prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians). The report details the disturbing rise in racial abuse, discrimination and violent attacks directed at members of Arab and Muslim communities following September 11. Key concerns in relation to this issue include:

- The impact on young people's social and mental health. When young people feel targeted and discriminated against, agencies report diminished self-esteem, an increase in aggressive, defensive and anti-social behavior, and increased expression of anger and violence. Young women tend to withdraw and drop out from school. Young men may become more emotionally charged and feel the whole world is against them. This

sense of marginalisation can further their disengagement from the wider community.

- Agencies are particularly concerned about young people dropping out of school, particularly as post-September 11 school often proved to be an unsafe space for CALD young people.
- Isolation. Parents fear that their children may be detained under the new laws and families are becoming increasingly insular and more protective of their children. Young people may not be allowed to participate in outside activities such as school or sport or meeting friends in public places.

Adolescent behaviours

Adolescence is a time of exploring new ideas, meeting new people and testing boundaries, and as a result young people are likely to be inadvertently caught up in these laws. Communities fear that young people could be investigated for possessing material, accessing internet sites, attending public forums etc that are in some ways linked to alleged terrorist activities or organisations even if there is no evidence that the person has directly engaged in terrorist-related behaviors.

Impact on community agencies

Agencies working with CLD young people have already reported increased calls for assistance. Following recent media about the proposed legislation and raids and arrests, agencies report being inundated with calls from people who are distressed and seeking support, an increase in demand for education about the laws from their communities, and reports of increased acts of racism towards clients.

Implementation strategies

It is vital that the introduction of legislation is accompanied by a comprehensive education campaign about the laws and resources for community organisations to provide education to their communities. In addition to strategies targeting parents and adult family members, youth specific education is an important component of this. Young people will require significant education about this legislation and access to appropriate and timely legal advice and information.

Full text of the Anti-Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005 <http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/browse.aspx?NodeID=148>

Full submission available on the DCI - Australian website <http://www.dci-au.org/submission2.pdf>

*Report by Paula Grogan, Director, Youthlaw.
For further info please contact Youthlaw on 9611-2423 or email paula@youthlaw.asn.au*

Investing For Success: the economics of supporting young people leaving care —

Under the new Child, Youth and Families Bill, currently before the Victorian Parliament, the State Government has a new responsibility to provide or arrange for the provision of services to young people leaving the State's care, up to the age of 21.

Currently, services for the 450 young people leaving care in Victoria are provided on an ad hoc basis, with no statutory requirement to provide support beyond the age of 18.

In 2005, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare launched its report on a two year research project into outcomes for young people leaving care. The project examined the life pathways of young people leaving care in Victoria to establish the costs and benefits of providing leaving care support services to young people beyond the current cut-off age of 18 years. The Centre also sought to establish a viable model of support for young people making the transition to independent living. The project surveyed 60 young people, aged between 18 and 25, who had been in State care in Victoria for at least two years, to generate the data for this work.

Life Outcomes

The study presents an unequivocal economic argument for supporting young people in their transition to independence, as well as demonstrating relationships between several post-care support variables and positive life outcomes. The evidence about current life outcomes for young people leaving care paints a bleak picture:

- One fifth had left care without a case plan for their future
- Only 13 per cent of young people in the cohort had completed Year 12, compared with 67 per cent of the general youth population, with about half leaving school before Year 10
- 71 per cent had no job and 88 per cent were on income support
- More than half received an income of less than \$200 per week
- More than half had debt problems
- 28 per cent had children and more than half of the children were under care orders
- 45 per cent were in unstable housing arrangements
- 43 per cent reported not having any support from a family member in the two years since leaving care
- Almost two-thirds reported having been diagnosed with a disability or illness in their lifetime, 32% had been diagnosed with a mental disability or illness and 22% with an intellectual disability

Relationships between support and life outcomes

The young people in the study were asked to identify the kinds of help they had received in the two years since leaving care and the source of this help. They were also asked about their experiences in care. This information provided the basis for an analysis of statistical relationships between experiences in care, the support received after care and life outcomes. These are some of the significant statistical relationships that emerged in our study:

- Young people who had stable accommodation to go to after leaving care were three times more likely to be in employment
- Those who had help in the two years after leaving care:
 - a) with finding a job at least sometimes, were twice as likely to be working
 - b) with financial support, are 1.9 times less likely to be involved with the police
 - c) with finding accommodation, or finding a job, or with organising their lives, were more likely to be involved in their community
- Those who had some preparation for leaving care were 2.2 times more likely to report being happy with their lives now. They were also 1.5 times more likely to feel hopeful about their futures than those who did not take part in such preparation

The economic case for supporting young people leaving care

To provide a cost/benefit analysis of supporting young people leaving care, the use of a range of government services by young people leaving care and young people in the general community was compared. Only State Government costs were included in the analysis. Costs were calculated on a per person per annum basis, then computed as a total lifetime cost (up to age 60), using 2004/05 dollars. The difference between the costs associated with a young person leaving care and a member of the general population represents potential savings if the life outcomes for a young person leaving care could be improved to the level of a member of the general population.

The difference in costs per person over a lifetime in our study was \$738,741. As approximately 450 young people leave care in Victoria each year, the potential cost savings gap for Government amounts to \$332.5m per year. This is a conservative estimate!

The report proposes a "wrap-around" model of support services for young people leaving care, such as accommodation, life skills, mentoring, education/training, job search/employment support, health etc. Given the evidence in our research, we believe that support should be available up to the age of 25, to bring the State's parenting practices in line with contemporary parenting practice. After all, 75 per cent of 18 and 19 year olds in the gen-

**a research project of the Centre for
Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
in association with the Monash
University, Melbourne**



eral population still live with their parents. It must also be remembered that most young people have gone into a care environment because of abuse or neglect, so have an additional need for support.

The cost for a wraparound model of support for seven years (18-25) is estimated at \$172,060 per person. However, using the resilience data that emerged from the survey, we assumed that not all of the young people would want to use all the services over the entire seven years. We therefore estimated the average total cost of support services per young person leaving care at \$86,030.

Challenges for the future

Victoria has just taken the important first step of recognising through legislation, the need for a continuing role for the State in supporting young people through their transition from State care. When the legislation is passed, this support will be extended to young people until they are 21 years of age. The Government's White Paper also acknowledges that in some instances, young people might require support on a flexible basis until 25. The challenge ahead lies in working collaboratively to decide how leaving care services should be structured and delivered across Victoria. More importantly, the challenge is to ensure that appropriate resources are committed to make this initiative work for young people.

NOTE: The State-wide Leaving Care Forum, a group of practitioners working with young people in out-of-home care, is planning to convene a forum in February 2006 to consider the options for ensuring the new legislative provision translates into the best possible support for young people leaving care.

For further information about this forum, or the Leaving Care Project, contact Sunitha Raman, Social Policy & Wellbeing Manager, policy@cwav.asn.au, or Stephanie Francis, Senior Policy & Communications Officer, stephanie.francis@cwav.asn.au, or contact them at the Centre on (03) 9614 1577.

2005—THE YEAR THAT WAS

Wow! It's almost over. 2005 has whizzed by so fast, we thought it might be useful for us to do a review of what's happened over the past 11 or so months and what YACVic's been consumed with.

January

After the announcement of a Child Safety Commissioner (CSC) late in December 2004, YACVic set about in 2005 to see if we could get to the bottom of the announcement and see where it left our hard fought campaign for a Children and Young Person's Commission. We were very disappointed that it appeared the CSC role would have a narrow focus on safety issues and would not sit outside of government, instead it would report to the newly created Minister for Children and sit within the Department for Human Services.

YACVic took a direct hit in January and February with two burglaries wiping out all of our computers. Thanks to our fantastic computer techies we were able to be back up and running within a week or two and managed to recover without too much difficulty.

February

YACVic, Youthlaw and the Disability Discrimination Legal Service successfully tendered for a contract with DHS to establish an advocacy service for young people with disabilities. In February we set about planning for this important program development and working out just what we'll do.

Underage Gigs in the CBD were under threat with the suspension of the issuing of licenses for these events late in 2004. YACVic worked closely with the City of Melbourne and the Office for Youth to ensure that young people's views were taken into consideration in the development of guidelines that would see the gigs re-instated.

March

The Government had announced in late 2004 its plans to put a Working with Children Check in place in Victoria and in March YACVic submitted their response to the issue. The far-reaching effects of the proposal for a new checking system impacting on all Victorian's working or volunteering with young people received mixed community responses, and YACVic raised some concerns about the implications of the check on organisations and young people themselves.

The new guidelines for the Youth Participation and Access Program were announced. These followed a re-alignment of the previous Youth Services Program Grants. While the re-alignment meant that some previously funded services would not be eligible for future funding under YPAP, the rigorous process of consultation and discussion that the Office for Youth undertook throughout the re-alignment meant that no-one could complain that they weren't involved or didn't know it was coming - well done OFY!

...CONTINUED PAGE 6

2005 —THE YEAR THAT WAS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

April

The State Government releases A Fairer Victoria. This landmark piece of government policy acknowledges that while much of Victoria is prospering there are parts of our community that are not doing so well. Beyond this A Fairer Victoria goes on to detail how the State Government will work to address the social imbalances that exist in Victoria, with a number of measures across several important policy areas. YACVic welcomes the document and identifies some gaps and questions around implementation. These are addressed through our meetings with the Minister.

YACVic responds to the Inner City Entertainment Precinct Taskforce discussion paper, containing the 'option' of providing police with move-on powers.

May

Georgie attends the 8th International Congress on Adolescent Health in Lisbon, Portugal. This conference brought together experts in the field of youth health from around the world to discuss questions relating to positive youth development.

Jade Colgan joins the YACVic team as the State-Coordinator of the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council (VIYAC). VIYAC is a structure through which Indigenous young people aged 12 - 25 from across the state can make themselves heard about issues of importance to them.

We make submissions in response to the Senate Mental Health Inquiry and the Education and Training discussion paper.

June

Following the moving of JPET from FACS to DEWR late in 2004, YACVic was contacted by a couple of concerned JPET providers who thought it would be wise for us to convene a statewide JPET providers meeting to bring the players together and discuss possible issues and concerns. These meetings have continued to take place in 2005.

The Space Invaders? Young People and Public Space forum was hosted by YACVic in the docklands. The forum was organised by members of the Public Space Action Group and was well attended by young people, youth service providers, local and State Government representatives and academics.

July

YACVic works collaboratively with Youthlaw to host forums for young people to have input on the proposed Charter of Human Rights for Victoria. Young people are also encouraged to directly submit their opinions to the Human Rights committee using a submission tool developed by Youthlaw and YACVic.

YACVic is represented on the Advocate for Children in Care's Charter of Rights for Children in Care Stakeholder focus group, and endorses the submissions on a Charter made by the Council to Homeless Persons and Youthlaw.

August

Jen and Georgie attend the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth conference Closing the Know-Do Gap in Sydney.

September

YACVic submits its response to the Children's Bill, later to become the Children, Young People and Families Bill which outlines changes to the Child Protection System in Victoria. YACVic has engaged in many community based consultations with other agencies around the Bill, and is concerned to ensure that the needs of young people are sufficiently recognised and addressed by the Bill.

October

A hectic month for YACVic. Our AGM allows us an opportunity to launch the YACVic strategic plan 2005-08, the culmination of a years work involving extensive consultations with the sector. Also made available at the forum was YACVic's research report Snapshots from the edge: Young People and Service Providers on the Urban Fringe of Melbourne.

YACVic moves offices to our new, improved home in Flinders Street which provides a fresh new space with great views of Federation Square.

VIYAC have their first meeting as a council, outlining their key objectives for their future work. (see page 10)

November

YACVic provides input on a joint submission in response to the Anti-terrorism legislation proposed by the Federal Government. Under the proposed legislation, young people aged between 16 and 18 can be made subject to preventative detention and control orders.

YACVic also submits to VicRoads about Young Driver Safety, reporting the outcomes of two forums in which young people discuss government proposals to improve young driver safety with a new graduated licensing structure. The forums were the result of a collaboration with VicRoads and the Office for Youth.

YACVic and CHP run a joint forum Housing Young People: Getting a Foot in the Door at the Richmond Town Hall.

December

Members of the VIYAC will have their first meeting with the Hon Gavin Jennings, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

YACVic will host an open day and Christmas celebratory drink on the 8th of December from 3:00pm - 6:00pm, so please come along and join us in our new home!

DRIVING FOR A FUTURE

Government moves to improve young drivers' safety.

The State Government is considering a range of measures to improve young drivers safety, which may result in a restructuring of the licensing system.

VicRoads have been receiving submissions in response to the proposals put forward in the Young Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing Discussion Paper. YACVic worked collaboratively with VicRoads and the Office for Youth to ensure that young people's perspectives were heard on this important subject. Two forums were run, one in the inner city and one in Horsham, in which young people learnt about young drivers safety and the proposals the Government was considering and then shared their opinions about the proposals. Inner City Roadsafe, and the City of Melbourne also supported the inner city consultation. Wimmera Roadsafe provided support to the Horsham consultation. The opinions of young people participating in the forum were fed back to the Government in a YACVic submission to VicRoads.

The case for taking measures to improve young drivers' safety in Victoria is made clearly in the Young Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing Discussion Paper. The paper reports that 'each year 120 people are killed and 2,300 are seriously injured in crashes involving 18-25 year old drivers - this is one third of the road toll.' Key issues that place young drivers at higher risk are:

- Inexperience
- Drink Driving
- Poor driving records and speeding
- Mobile phone use
- Poor vehicle safety—driving cars that are less safe
- Late night driving
- Multiple passengers
- The role of parents/carers in influencing driving habits

Inexperience is the most significant factor in the vulnerability of young drivers. Young drivers are highly unlikely to have an accident whilst driving on a Learners Permit. It is in the first six to twelve months of driving on a Probationary licence that young people are at their highest risk of having an accident. In response to this, the Government is considering extending the amount of time that a young driver spends on a Learners Permit from six to twelve months, and making it compulsory to gain 120 hours practice as a Learner.

Young people who participated in the forums were generally supportive of measures to increase the level of experience that young people receive as Learner Drivers, but raised some concerns about young people having access to 120 hours experience and the quality of the driving experience young people may receive. Participants reported that gaining 120 hours would be

very difficult for some young people, particularly young people living independently or in households without a car. The costs of professional driving lessons were prohibitive for some young people or may be difficult to access if living in a remote area. Participants favoured a scheme to provide financial subsidies, or offer community based mentoring programs for young drivers to access lessons to make lessons more accessible.

Young people in the Horsham consultation reported that finding opportunities to get a range of driving experience was difficult, reporting that road and traffic conditions in their area didn't offer enough variety. They proposed an opportunity for young rural drivers to gain experience in busier settings such as the inner city through a young drivers camp.

The Government is also proposing a new structure to the Probationary Licence, with the potential introduction of a Graduated Licence. The new structure would include a P1 and a P2 Licence. A good driving record would be required to move from the P1 to the P2 stage and restrictions would be placed on drivers in each stage, including no mobile phone use as a P1 driver and P2 drivers being subject to 'anti-hoon laws' with sanctions to include impounding or possible confiscation of vehicles.

Participants were generally very supportive on restrictions on mobile phone use, with many suggesting that they should apply to all drivers. Proposed 'anti-hoon laws' were not generally favoured however, with participants suggesting that they didn't believe these measures would deter young drivers from dangerous driving practises. YACVic also pointed out in the submission that many young people described their reliance on driving to access employment and social opportunities, and that this needed to be taken on board when considering the potential implications of impounding young people's cars.

The Government is considering many other potential measures to improve young driver safety. To read about them, visit the arrive alive website on www.arrivealive.vic.gov.au

A copy of YACVic's submission on Young Driver Safety can be downloaded from our website www.yacvic.org.au

Meet the new Chair

Hello from the new Chair. As the EO's report will show, the last month has been a busy time for all concerned at YACVic including Board, staff and many of our members with the AGM, office relocation, finalising the Strategic Plan and establishing the new disability service.

Georgie and her team should be proud that all has gone so smoothly and without any new grey hairs! Once again, well done and a big thanks to the whole team.

While handing out Thank You's let's not forget Rowena Allen, Craig Hodges, Brad Rowsell and Lise Dalla Torre who served on the Board over the past year and more. Leaving YACVic in an all-round better position than they found it is a tribute to their efforts. Thanks for the big boots to fill.

Without turning my first article for YIKES! into a great big gush-fest... one last thank you - to Minister Allan. The Minister helped us celebrate the 5th anniversary of YACVic's re-funding by launching the new YACVic Strategic Plan in the dizzying heights of the Redmond Barry Room after the AGM.

The new Board returned to earth from those heights by electing office bearers, the Policy Advisory Group and Youth Reference Group for the year ahead. As well as electing the Chair (Me - YAY!!), Jordina Rust is the new Deputy Chair and Peter Newling as Treasurer has been entrusted with the purse strings. Cheryl Naik the Young Media Spokesperson is also new to the Board as are Michael Pountney, Noelle De Clifford and Toni Hancock. Continuing members Nik, Ashley and Luke complete the Board.

The Board's main role is to set the broad direction for YACVic and the Strategic Plan is an important document as it sets out our goals for the next few years. The Strategic Plan was developed in conjunction with YACVic members and it's the Board's task to ensure that we execute the plan and keep members informed of progress. With these tasks in mind, the Board will prepare its agenda for 2006 in the lead up to Christmas.

Aaah Christmas! For most of us it's a time for presents, sun-filled holidays and family. For some young people Christmas is a time that highlights their disconnection and despair. So Christmas should be a time we should celebrate the year's successes, to reflect on lessons learnt and to look forward to the new year ahead with enthusiasm.

Personally I'll be looking forward to a quick family visit to Adelaide before returning for the traditional Boxing Day test match (go aussies) and then straight back into it. Keep safe and see y'all in the new year.

Dave Hamra, YACVic Chairperson

Meet the new Board

At the AGM on October 12 this year YACVic members elected five new Board members. The YACVic Board for 2005/06 are:

Peter Newling	Dave Hamra
Noelle De Clifford	Jordina Rust
Toni Hancock	Ashley Perez
Mike Pountney	Nik Dragojlovic
Cheryl Naik	Luke Bo'sher

Some of you will remember at our 2004 AGM members voted to change the constitution to ensure that the Board had 50% membership of young people. We are now in our second year of having this change on the Board and it is working very well. Our "young" Board members are: Ashley, Jordina, Luke, Mike and Cheryl. Cheryl, our new Young Media Spokesperson, has begun her term with a bang, with two articles in this issue of YIKES! You can read a bit more about Cheryl opposite and see her article on young people and depression on page 16.

Our other new young person member of the Board is Mike Pountney. You can read more about Mike and all of our Board members at: http://www.yacvic.org.au/pages/about_us/board.htm

We have also welcomed several new "not young" members to the Board. Peter Newling works for the National YMCA and has had a long association with YACVic. Noelle De Clifford works for the Salvation Army and like Pete, has been a YACVic supporter and member for many years. Replacing Rowena as YACVic's designated regional/rural representative is Toni Hancock. Toni lives and works in Warrnambool, where she is the Executive Officer for the South West Local Learning and Employment Network.

The Board have already met and elected their office bearers. Dave Hamra was elected to the role of Chair, Jordina Rust to the role of Deputy Chair and Peter Newling has taken on the role of Treasurer. All of the new Board members are appointed for a two year period, except for the position of Young Media Spokesperson which is elected annually by the members.

There is a lot of energy and enthusiasm around the Board table already, members are rareing to go with lots of ideas. All Board meetings are open to YACVic members and you are encouraged to come a long and get involved. The next Board meeting is on December 15th at YACVic—see you there!



L-R: Ashley Perez, Dave Hamra, Peter Newling, Toni Hancock, Noelle De Clifford, Jordie Rust, Mike Pountney. Absent: Cheryl Naik, Nik Dragojlovic.

Our new YRG

There were 24 nominations for the YACVic Youth Reference Group (YRG) this year. Normally the Board appoint the YRG at their first meeting and the constitution states that the group consist of up to 15 young people. However, the Board felt strongly that they did not want to turn any young people down and were so impressed with the nominations that they decided to ask the young people who have nominated to come up with an alternative way to keep them all engaged with YACVic while still fulfilling our constitutional requirements. The YRG have already met and agreed that it made no sense to knock some young people back for the sake of having 15 official YRG members, so they are in the process of coming up with an alternative. The Board agreed this process was also in keeping with a youth participation model, where the young people work out a process that works best for them. The new face of the YRG are:

Dani Kline	Tanya Tran
Calvin Hing-Lung Tsang	Jamie Byron
Eleanor Toulmin	Rachael Holt
Jessica Wiggan	Matilda Stickels
Michael Boucher	Alice Cooney
Leah Parente	Jordina Rust
Thomas Griffin	Jazeer Nijamudeen
Amy Shand	Vin Noom
Cassandra Devine	Claire Barrance
Cheryl Naik	Simon Robjant
Sankaran Kasynathan	Kiyanna Mischkulnia
Diana Sandulache	Benjamin Skepper



Back: Matilda, Rachel, Jamie, Cheryl, Tanya, Jessica. Front: Calvin, Cassandra, Sankaran, Leah —just some of the new YRG!

There is a great range of diversity and a ton of enthusiasm within the group, with dozens of ideas bubbling up even from the first meeting. The YRG are considering a process of 'working groups' to allow members to focus on specific areas of interest. Suggestions for issues to focus on for the coming year include mental health, bullying, the impact of family breakdown on young people, stereotyping of young people, housing and homelessness, public transport, issues for same-sex attracted young people, the environment, and participation within local communities. Phew! The YRG have another meeting planned for December and are keen to get their teeth into lots of issues in 2006—watch this space!

Our new Young Media Spokesperson

Cheryl Naik, a member of the Youth Reference Group at YACVic since 2004, is the Young Media Spokesperson for 2005-2006.

A Year 12 graduate in 2005, Cheryl is preparing for a new phase in life as a tertiary student. She has received specialised training

in communication over four years and has received many awards in public speaking, including twice as Runner-Up at the state level. In 2005 she underwent a 40-hour training in radio production and presentation. In 2004 Cheryl was selected by the Department of Victorian Communities as one of the Youth Ambassadors for the Eureka 150 project organised by the Government. As a Youth Ambassador Cheryl was in the media sub-group, and acted as a spokesperson to visual and print media on behalf of the youth team. She gave speeches at various secondary schools, about the message on democracy to be learnt as a result of the events around Eureka stockade.

Cheryl is passionate about youth issues. She is committed to supporting community initiatives that focus on self-esteem for youth. Cheryl is also on the Youth Action Committee (2005-2007) at Foundation Boroondara. One of her major interests is supporting organisations that work with mental health and depression, particularly among the youth. In 2005 she interviewed Hon Jeff Kennett, the former Premier and currently the Chairman of BeyondBlue—an organisation that is at the forefront of raising awareness on depression. (see page 16)

Cheryl believes that low self-esteem is the primary cause of many problems faced by youth and that by having greater abilities in communication one can have greater self-esteem. To this end, Cheryl is determined to introduce youth to various communication skills, thereby hoping to increase their self-esteem.

Our new PAG

The Policy Advisory Group (PAG) is an invaluable part of the YACVic structure, providing advice and guiding YACVic policy work. Nominations were taken for the PAG leading up to YACVic's annual general meeting and we are very pleased to announce the 2005-06 PAG membership:

- Alison Coelho, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
- Sheree Limbrick, Berry Street Victoria
- Liz Davies, Centre for Adolescent Health
- Anna Duff, Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program
- Katherine Monson, The Eastweb Fund
- Toby Medhurst, Bayside City Council
- Anita Doyle, Ballarat Community Health Centre
- Roger Holdsworth, Australian Youth Research Centre and Connect
- Andrew Lavin, Australian Catholic University
- Michelle Marvin, Orygen Youth Health
- Lenche Kozmevska, Melbourne City Mission
- Andrew Williamson, William Angliss Institute of TAFE
- Greta Jubb, Aboriginal Legal Service
- Chris Walsh, The Salvation Army, Eastcare
- Cherry Grimwade, City of Melbourne

Special thanks goes to the members of the 2004-05 PAG many of whom have continued on this year.

Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council

VIYAC has had many positive developments since the last Yikes edition. We now have 14 young Indigenous volunteer Regional Representatives on board who make up the VIYAC council. The Representatives ages range from 12 to 24 years and they come from across the whole state. They are all eager and dedicated to making positive changes for Indigenous youth.

The VIYAC Reference Group, who are respected members of the Indigenous community and members from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and The Office for Youth, have met again. At the meeting more direction and focus was made and given to VIYAC. The Reference Group members are very happy and satisfied with VIYAC's progress to date and seem eager to see where VIYAC heads and what it accomplishes in the next twelve months.

VIYAC has had its first Council Meeting...

VIYAC held its first full council meeting on Wednesday the 26th of October at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne. The meeting ran all day and was attended by 9 of the 14 council members. The day was enjoyed by all and a lot was achieved.

The 3 core objectives set for the day were:

1. To bring the group together, feel like we all know one another and HAVE FUN!!!!
2. After looking at the aims and identifying the main issues; what do we want VIYAC to be and achieve.
3. How are we going to start to do it? Where to from here... What do we want to do?

The group managed to fulfil these three objectives.

The day was aimed at being a chance for the members to meet one another, gel as a group and set some clear direction for the VIYAC. The day comprised of group discussions on issues the group thought were important, as well as some sharing sessions. The group also came up with a new slogan for VIYAC, "A Strong Voice for Indigenous Youth", which they seem very happy with.

All the members seemed to enjoy the day and get a lot out of it. They all contributed so much of their knowledge and views on issues affecting them and other Indigenous young people. They were all extremely eager to get VIYAC established and promoted as best they can and to start to work as a group and hopefully make some positive changes.

The group came up with four main objectives that they would like to achieve over the next 12-month period as well as an array of other great ideas and ventures the group hope to achieve.

The four objectives are:

1. Creating a website for VIYAC.
2. Establishing faces for VIYAC. (Photos of selected people that can be used on general VIYAC publications, promotional items and the website).
3. Creating capacity building opportunities for the VIYAC Regional Representatives.
4. Developing mentor programs for Indigenous young people in the VIYAC regions.



Top left to bottom right: Keira Martin, Brent Harrison, Megan Laxton, Zack Haddock, Jamie McConnachie, Jon Kanoa, Shantel Thompson, Jade Colgan and Whitney Solemon

Inspiration

The group had an inspirational guest speaker in Kevin Coombs, an Aboriginal Elder who has achieved great things like; competing in the Paralympics on numerous occasions, holding senior positions in Aboriginal organisations throughout Victoria, working closely with Aboriginal hostels Australia, sustaining a great and rich family life and so much more. He accomplished all of this as a paraplegic from the age of 9. He is amazing and was a real inspiration and role model for the VIYAC members.

Issues

The group also established a list of issues affecting Indigenous youth in their communities region by region. The group wanted to reflect on positive issues as well as the negative ones, which tend to outweigh the positives a lot of the time. The main issues that seemed to resonate throughout all of the regions were:

- Drugs and Alcohol
- Violence
- Racism
- Justice - Treatment by police
- Lack of knowledge of resources available to Indigenous youth
- Relationship between Elders and youth-Lack of Respect

We will also have an opportunity to raise our concerns about these issues with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Mr Gavin Jennings in the first of our quarterly meetings with the minister.

For info on VIYAC contact the State Co-ordinator, Jade Colgan on 9267 3799 or email jcolgan@yacvic.org.au

Some comments from our new VIYAC members.

Whitney

"I had a really good time on the day, I was really happy that so many people showed up which shows their dedication to Indigenous young people and making a change for the future. And the speaker on the day, was so inspiring to hear, the courage that he had to not give up and keep fighting for the rights of all disadvantaged people in the world, made you feel privileged to hear his story. Reminded me of my Pop in ways."



Megan Laxton and Brent Harrison

Zack

"Having the opportunity to meet fellow council members to exchange ideas, views, theories and resources is an invaluable asset, not only to the peak body and our respective communities but also allowed a great deal of professional and personal growth for myself. Allowing me to network with like minded individuals and bounce ideas and opinions etc!!!!"



The council busy at work

Keira

"I had a great time at the meeting the other day, it was so interesting and motivating to hear what other youth in other regions are doing and would like to do.... I look forward to the upcoming months of being a part of VIYAC."

Jon

"I think that the VIYAC meeting was beneficial not just to the members, but the youth of the state in a way that we have a vision for the future, we are identifying the issues of each community, and we are trying to address those issues that surround our younger generation and also helping the youth to become the leaders of tomorrow! That's just my thought anyways!!"

Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP) receives extended funding

YACVic is a key partner in YRIPP which represents a partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, Victoria Police, Crime Prevention Victoria (program funder), the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs and other agencies.

YRIPP provides trained, volunteer Independent Persons to attend police interviews with young people under 18, where their parent or guardian is not available. YRIPP has consolidated and streamlined the recruitment, training and deployment of Independent Persons for police interviews with young people suspected of an offence in 14 police stations.

In its 15 months of operation, YRIPP has trained over 100 volunteers in police and legal processes, working with young people (including Indigenous and culturally diverse young people) and local referral processes. Our volunteers come from diverse cultures and employment backgrounds and bring a wide range of experiences to the role. YRIPP's survival is completely dependent on the goodwill and reliability of its volunteers and we are continually grateful to all those who give up their time (sometimes in the early hours of the morning) to support young people.

Since its commencement, YRIPP's volunteers have supported around 350 young people (including around 20% Indigenous and 10% culturally diverse young people) through police interviews, making referrals to health and welfare support services where appropriate.

YRIPP funding

The YRIPP staff and Steering Committee are grateful to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Honourable Tim Holding, for providing bridging funding to implement YRIPP to June 2006. We also thank the Minister for his commitment for Government to continue working with YRIPP management towards identifying an ongoing funding base for the program.

I would also like to say a huge thank you to YRIPP's staff, volunteers and agencies who assisted with our funding campaign. There is now a significant level of awareness about the program within different parts of Government and a growing recognition that YRIPP forms a crucial part of the youth justice landscape.

YRIPP staff changes

Sharon Murphy, YRIPP Local Coordinator for the Cities of Maribyrnong / Brimbank and Hume, is departing from YRIPP in December. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sharon for her hard work over the last 18 months and to wish her well in her future endeavours. The role of YRIPP Local Coordinator (Maribyrnong / Brimbank), will be filled by Anna Duff who will be based at the Footscray Community Legal Centre (tel: 9689 8444). The role of YRIPP Local Coordinator (Hume) will be filled by Joanne Joosten. Joanne is based at the Broadmeadows Community Legal Service (tel: 9302 3911).

In addition, due to YACVic's recent move, my new contact details are at YACVic's new premises (see Yikes! front page) or email sreid@yacvic.org.au and I always welcome any feedback.

Sally Reid, YRIPP Program Manager

Australia's Emerging Gender Gap

New report out on how young people are faring in the workplace.

Young women face greater risks in making a successful transition from education to employment, according to the country's annual national report on young people in learning and work.

Releasing *How Young People are Faring 2005*, Dr John Spierings of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF) said, "younger women who are not in education are considerably more disadvantaged in the job market than young men, a trend that has been increasing since 2000."

The seventh annual report paints a picture of 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. While many young people today are better educated and better skilled than previous generations, an estimated 560,000 15-24-year-olds are not in full-time learning or work.

Those growing up in stressed socio-economic circumstances, rural Australia, Indigenous communities and young women not in education are particularly susceptible.

Dr Spierings said, "more than 330,000 of the young Australians not engaged full-time in learning or work are female. The difference between the sexes is the largest since 1989 and is markedly higher than in previous years."

The report cites the following 2005 data:

- 17 percent of female teenagers were unemployed, working part-time or not in the labour force compared to 12 percent of male teenagers
- 33 percent of female school leavers experienced a troubled transition six months after leaving school compared to 27 percent of male school leavers
- 18 percent of young adult women were unemployed or working part-time compared to 14 percent of young men.

Mike Long of the Monash University-ACER Centre for the Economics of Education and Training prepared *How Young People are Faring 2005* for DSF, an independent national education and skills organisation.

Despite an unprecedented period of sustained economic growth, the report finds that the proportion of young people considered "at risk" has remained unchanged for two decades.

"Skills shortages and an ageing workforce make improving the education and training of young Australians an economic and social imperative," Dr Spierings said.

Further highlights in the report are:

- At a time when Australia faces a national skills shortage, with migration seen as a favoured policy option, 30 percent of Australia's school leavers were unemployed, in part-time work or not in the labour force six months

after leaving school. 43 percent of early school leavers and 23 percent of school completers experienced a troubled transition from school in 2004

- Leaving school at Year 10 is a considerable risk: 45 percent of Year 10 leavers were 'at risk' in the labour market six months after leaving school
- Young people are now beginning to share the benefits of the unprecedented long boom of the past decade. However teenage unemployment rates are more than three and a half times higher than for older workers; and young adult (20-24 year olds) rates remain twice as high as those for older workers
- Australia is becoming a nation of the overworked or the underemployed. It has one of the highest rates of part-time employment for non-students in the OECD, and for young people, the growth of part-time employment is outstripping full-time employment. 55 to 60 percent of young people working part-time (excluding full-time students) want to work more hours
- Educational attainment in Australia continues to improve - 80 percent of teenagers have completed secondary school or a Certificate II or higher. However other countries are improving as quickly or faster
- Although Indigenous young people remain under-represented in New Apprenticeships, commencements have improved to 3.2 percent
- The proportion of school leavers entering an apprenticeship or traineeship has risen from 16 percent in 1999 to 18 percent in 2004 while the proportion of school leavers entering higher education has declined from 40 percent in 1999 to 34.5 percent in 2004

Dr Spierings said, *"Governments - Commonwealth and State - are moving to improve the prospects of school leavers, especially early school leavers. It's an area of vital micro-economic reform that can benefit not just young Australians and their parents, but Australian industry as well."*

"The challenge this report presents is to match the high expectations of government initiatives with adequate resources, co-ordination and planning. Personal support and career guidance, robust learning choices, labour market programs and structural incentives are needed if our young people really are going to make a successful transition from school to an enduring career."

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum can be contacted on 02 9571 8347 or email: info@dsf.org.au, or their website: <http://www.dsf.org.au>. You can order reports from the DSF at: http://www.dsf.org.au/order_papers1.php?pid=180

Some schools still anti-gay

Students suffer as schools resist introduction of anti-homophobic bullying policies

A landmark conference into Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Transgender and Intersex (GLBTI) sexuality education programs in Australian schools has revealed an alarming lack of anti-homophobic programs and the continued abuse of queer students.

Many students across Victoria still suffer from homophobic abuse, leading many to contemplate suicide.

Researchers, education policymakers and teachers who attended Schooling and Sexualities "Ten Years On" conference in Melbourne heard that while some schools have embraced sexual health education classes which incorporate GLBTI discussion, many continue to resist it.

Many presenters felt the problem was an absence of a national, compulsory program and the unwillingness of principals, politicians and parents to allow same-sex issues to be formally raised in schools.

At present, school curriculum is a state issue. While there are excellent resources available, such as the national Talking Sexual Health program developed by La Trobe University, and various state programs such as Shine in South Australia, and work being done by Victoria's Rainbow Network, schools are not required to teach them.

"Parents are a main obstacle, as well as politicians and organisations from the Christian right, who often block programs," said co-conference co-ordinator Dr Lisa Hunter, lecturer at Queensland's Griffith University. "The moment you put the word 'sex' in a school program you are shooting yourself in the foot. Even states with mandatory curriculum, it's not necessarily carried out and it's still on a school-by-school basis."

Ms Hunter said it is easier to introduce the issue of sexuality within a course based on social justice and equity, which also included the topics of race, ethnicity, Aboriginality and disability.

A panel of young Victorian GLBTI students shared their experiences, a com-



mon theme among them being isolation from their peers, homophobia and a lack of support structure within schools. Yvonne, a year 12 student from Sale, spoke of how she was ostracised from her classmates through most of her high school years, bullied in front of teachers who turned a blind eye and denied access to sexual health information specific to lesbians. She said that by the age of 16 she was suicidal. She also received very little familial support, with her mother telling her "not to come home" after Yvonne revealed she was gay.

Several other students who spoke at the conference experienced similar emotional torment, depression and loneliness. All of the students said there was little or no educational policy regarding sexuality at their schools, and information about gay support groups was non-existent.

All agreed they would have benefited from such programs, and said increased education about same-sex attracted youth would probably have diminished the levels of homophobia they encountered.

Conference attendees also heard how many gay teachers are often unable to help gay students because they fear being outed themselves and suffering discrimination. The recent case, as reported by *The Age*, of a Melbourne University student teacher removed from her position after she told her students she was gay was cited as an example of such discrimination.

Tania Ferfolja, School of Education lecturer at the University of Western Sydney, shared her research on lesbian secondary teachers in government

schools in NSW. She told the conference most of the women were fearful of coming out and often led double lives.

Ms Ferfolja said the rise of neo-conservative and neo-liberal politics had a huge effect on attitudes in schools. Policies such as the ban on gay marriage, IVF access for lesbians and the adverse reaction to ABC TV's *Play School* episode featuring two lesbian parents contributed to a reluctance of gay teachers to be out at school.

Co-conference co-ordinator Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli said the conference, facilitated by US gay and lesbian education policy pioneer James T Sears, had some very positive outcomes.

She said a primary focus for those involved in education policy is to work towards a uniform approach, the introduction of programs into early childhood education and a more positive focus on GLBTI sexuality.

"We need to focus on the positive aspects of GLBTI issues for kids in schools, not just the negative aspects like homophobia. We should be celebrating their sexuality and talking about sex," she said.

"Programs are slowly getting into schools but we need to find a way to mandate their inclusion. Schools have an inherent heterosexuality, which is supported by a lack of equity in law and the use of language such as 'phase' and 'choosing a lifestyle'. That's the sort of attitude we need to change."

Written by Cathy Anderson

This article appeared in the Age Education, Monday October 24 2005

Young People Learning for Activism in Victoria

Young People and Politics: Tales of Apathy and Activism

By Ian Fyfe, University of Melbourne

Across the world there is mounting concern about the relationship between young people and politics. A common view has developed around the belief that the young are becoming increasingly disillusioned and disengaged from traditional forms of politics compared to older generations.

There is no doubt that for many Western Democracies voter turnout for 18 to 24 year olds has reached crisis point. Recent figures from the Australian Youth Electoral Study indicate that only 50% of 18 year old students would vote in Federal Elections if voting was not compulsory. This situation is compounded further by an alleged 'civics deficit' that implies young Australians lack the knowledge to participate in politics in an informed and meaningful way. All together the outlook is not encouraging.

In sharp contrast the apparent apathy of young Australians towards formal politics is balanced by the recorded rise of new and alternative forms of political activism and a commitment to broader issues of concern through membership of and campaign support for social movements such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Amnesty International. Young people are often at the forefront of issue-based campaigns concentrating on peace, environmental concerns, animal welfare and fair trade. The political attention of young people has also turned to new and emerging technologies, particularly the Internet as an alternative source of information and a site for critical discussion around social and political issues.

The participation of young people outside the sphere of conventional politics is however not a new phenomenon and their involvement has never been a fad. Young people who become politically active do so for the same reasons as others, often out of a clear sense of political, economic, social or environment injustice. Ironically perhaps young people's involvement in new or alternative forms of political action is often met with scorn and suspicion by politicians and media alike.

The prevailing assumption of the existing civics deficit among Australia's young

people has prompted the Federal Government to invest in school-based initiatives designed to enhance levels of civic knowledge, develop relevant skills for effective participation (mostly through voting) and nurture a value base to inform their decisions and subsequent actions. The most recent of these initiatives is the *Discovering Democracy* programme. It is also important to highlight however other sources of knowledge available in the informal education sector through youth work and community based learning linked to the everyday lives of young people and their immediate communities.

Some questions being addressed are how effective are existing educational programmes in preparing young people for political activism? What motivates young people to get involved? What would help support other young people to participate?

What is Learning for Activism?

Learning for Activism is an exciting new project supported by the University of Melbourne that is engaging with young people aged between 15 and 24 living in Victoria who are interested and involved in political activity. This can include forms of participation such as being a representative on a school SRC, taking part in demonstrations, posting a political blog or standing as a political party candidate in elections.

What is the project about?

The main aim of the project is to collect information from young people active in politics to gain a better understanding of what motivates them to be involved, learn what skills they bring to activism and identify some of the barriers they have overcome to be involved.

What happens to the information collected?

What we learn will be helpful in influencing political groups and organisations that support young people to actively participate in politics as well as offer insights into how educators and others working with young people can help prepare them for political life. Taking part in the project

will also give participants the opportunity to meet with other young activists, share stories and maybe make new contacts.

How can young people get involved?

There is a range of ways to get involved. Young activists will have the opportunity to take part in an individual interview to talk more about their involvement with politics. There is also the option of completing a questionnaire (which we hope will soon be available online). Over the next few months the project will also be hosting another series of group meetings where young activists will be invited to take part in discussions and activities focusing upon their experiences of political participation.

Where do I get more information?

If you are a young activist or know any young people who may be interested in getting involved in the project then we would like to hear from you.

For further information please contact Ian Fyfe by email at learningforactivism@bigpond.com or phone 0408136566.

Infoxchange's Youth News

This is a free and interactive portal for young people and youth workers in Victoria. Users can post news, or announcements of forthcoming events and awards, new publications, services and training on the news board. The Youth News Infocast, a snapshot of the Youth News website, can be emailed to you weekly.

Youth News features the Youth Services Victoria database, where you can search a comprehensive list of youth support services across the state. Youth Services Victoria is linked to the *Infoxchange Service Seeker*, which contains contact details for more than 100,000 community, not-for-profit and health organisations and agencies in Victoria. You can visit it directly via <http://youth.servicesseeker.com.au/>.

For info on Youth News or Youth Services database, contact Hayden Nicholls on (03) 9418 7425, or communitybuilding@infoxchange.net.au.

Young carers need time out too.

An insight into the life of a young carer of a parent with a mental illness

'One in ten young people aged between 15 and 25 years of age in Australia have a caring responsibility for someone who is frail aged, has a disability or chronic mental or physical illness'

(1998 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers unpublished data).



Melissa, a 19 year old woman living in the northern suburbs of Melbourne is one of these young people and has written about her life as a young carer. This is her story.

For most of my childhood I was unaware that my mother had Bi-polar disorder, then when I was seven my mum had a stroke, which caused memory loss, paralysis, speech impediments and completely changed her demeanor. Telling people about Mum's mental illness has always been a challenge. Even now, when it is so obvious, people don't really understand.

It's hard not to hate or resent my mother, you know it's not their fault but it's easier to blame someone, and it's easiest to blame the person who's sick. That's the biggest challenge is to still love the person who you once thought was perfect and indestructible, only to find that they're human too.

Growing up I liked school and was an average B+ to A student who enjoyed biology and environmental science. I missed a lot of school between Years 8 to 11, but this was not noticed until Year 11, when I dropped out and went to TAFE. My grades dropped, mostly because I wasn't attending. Education didn't seem important anymore, though I've always liked learning.

Sometimes it's difficult to fit in. I'm used to being alone and I couldn't relate to other kids at school, they seemed so immature. I've never had any good, lasting friendships, and certainly no boyfriends. I was distracted by all the big scary things in my life and didn't want to know about the little things.

Given Mum's physical restrictions she usually doesn't want to go anywhere. It's different for each carer, but I found I didn't go out much...I had no friends, and I would always worry about Mum so it was easier to stay home. It takes a lot of willpower to keep going with general life when it seems your personal life is a tragedy.

Being a carer has changed me and made me grow up faster. I became involved in the Paying Attention To Self (PATS) Program through my school social worker. PATS is a peer support group for young people aged between 13 - 18 years whose parents are affected by a

mental illness. The program is coordinated by the Centre for Adolescent Health in Parkville, with programs in seven sites around Victoria.

I have gained so much from the program; friends, communication skills, confidence, and the knowledge that it's okay to feel emotions. I understand more about my mothers' mental illness and am more tolerant of it. The key learning from the program for me is that I need to live my own life, which includes my mother, but it doesn't have to revolve around her. PATS showed me I'm not alone.

For more information about the PATS program please phone 9345 7950 or email pats.cah@rch.org.au, or www.rch.org.au/pats

The Younger Carers 'at risk' Respite program also offers support to young carers up to the age of 25 who are 'at risk' of prematurely leaving their education or training programs, by providing access to respite which will help them better manage and balance their educational and caring responsibilities. For a referral to this program please contact your local Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059

This article was written with the support of Rosamaria Tascone, a Health Promotion Worker from Women's Health In the North, Danielle Forer from the Paying Attention To Self Program and Connie Montagner, a Younger Carers Respite Support Worker from the Commonwealth Respite and Carer Link Centre/CarerLinks North.

A little listening...

By Cheryl Naik, YACVic's Young Media Spokesperson

In the first week of November I finished my school exams. What a relief! So many years spent learning so many things! There were the three 'R's, of course. And then there were other things to pick up. Like Mathematics, English, Economics and Accounting. Then there was Depression.

Well, depression wasn't really part of the curriculum. But it was there, always lurking! I have seen many young people showing some symptoms of depression. At times I wondered if these young people would cause some harm to themselves or to someone else. Fortunately for me, I do not have personal experience of what a depressed person feels within. But can I ignore the sufferers and walk away? When we hear about the death of a young person, it is very easy to dismiss that as an accident. Most suicides look like accidents. Let me not bore you with the sad statistics.

We are fortunate though, that there is some awareness in the community about depression. But does the awareness happen automatically? I don't think it does. We need people with a deep interest and commitment to wake the community up and spread the message!

I caught up with one such committed person recently. A very busy person indeed, who, I am sure, packs in 40 hours of work in a 24-hour day. Despite his busy schedule he let me have a chat with him on youth depression. Hon Jeff Kennett, the former Premier and currently the chairman of BeyondBlue, is on a mission. When he speaks about depression, one gets the feeling that here's someone who will make depression disappear with the swing of a magic wand. Not that he believes in an instant magical solution. But something tells you that he will stand on the front line until the enemy has been vanquished! And that confidence is contagious. You would want to join in the battle too!

Cheryl: How did it all start for you, Mr Kennett?

Jeff Kennett: About seven years ago, my daughter who was a little older than you at the time came to me one day after two young men had died in separate car accidents in Western Victoria and she knew one of them. And she said to me,

"Dad you have got to stop these young men dying on the roads".

Now that is a pretty big challenge for a young daughter to be asking that of the father but I was still Premier then and it gave me the opportunity to have those deaths examined and I found out that both young men, while they were car fatalities in terms of statistics, had actually been depressed and had used the cars to take their own life. They were suicides.

So that was the start of my journey down the advocacy for a national body that deals with depression. And, of course, it has become, since then, a much wider based organisation than just [for] young males in the countryside and it is now a national body that has got tremendous bipartisan support and I hope it's doing some very good work.

Cheryl: The national body is, of course, BeyondBlue. How do you think young people will benefit from BeyondBlue's initiatives?

Jeff Kennett: The reality is that young people are increasingly presenting at very young ages with issues that are affecting their well-being. And I am talking about young people in primary school and these might be children five to seven years of age. And they are witnessing at home unsatisfactory relationships between their mum and their dad who might be arguing a lot, sometimes physically abusing each other and that affects the child very much.

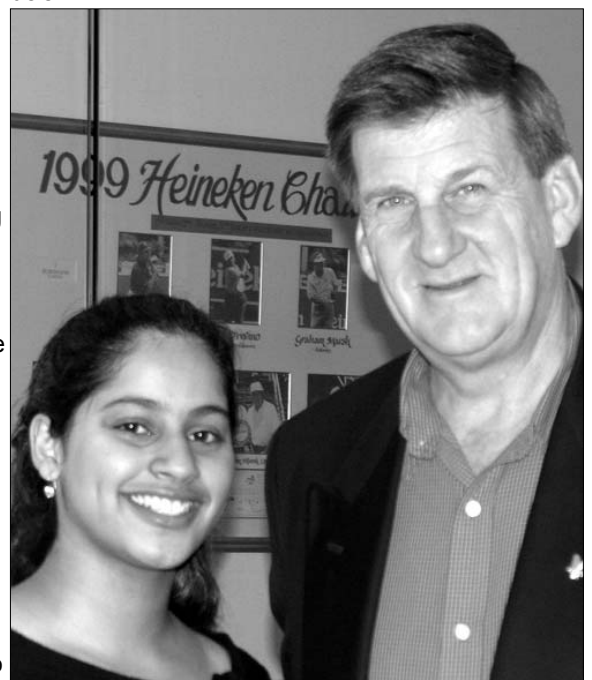
They might already be aware of the expectations that are put upon them by their parents to do well, or their brothers and sisters and that causes pressure and

anxiety. In many cases young people are not eating well enough, they are not clothed properly, so there are a lot of things that are going into the mix that are causing young people at a very early age to have anxiety and stress.

What BeyondBlue is trying to do is develop programs that will help those people while very young. We have already developed programs for children in secondary schools. But it is very much about self-esteem, how the young person feels about himself. We would like to be able to educate young people not to do silly things as they proceed through life. And that is more difficult because young people are charged with the excitement of youth and you don't think anything is a problem and you are going to live for life.

So, for instance, recreational drugs, in particular marijuana, are things that would lift the level of psychosis in a young person and cause depression. So we are doing a lot of educational programs to try and help young people not just with depression but get a better balance in their life.

Cheryl: How does BeyondBlue go about spreading its message to the young people? You mentioned about educational programs...



YACVic Young Media Spokesperson Cheryl Naik with Jeff Kennett, BeyondBlue Chairperson.

Problem gambling? There's help...

Kit targets apprentices/young construction industry workers

Jeff Kennett: We do a number of different things. We have a very effective website [called] YBBlue.org.au which is specifically designed for youth. We are associated with a lot of organisations that are youth related. So from time to time you might find us in pubs with bands selling our message, assisting in development of music. We have recently been associated with the CrocFest. Now the CrocFest is where young Indigenous people come together through schools. We are part of a musical, tap-dancing group called RawMetal. And RawMetal encourages young people to tap-dance.

We are in the schools. We have developed material for [the secondary] students. We have developed material for teachers and for the community of the school. And that is terribly important because you can't hope to help the children unless the teachers themselves are educated.

Now you have got to bear in mind though that most teachers' primary responsibility is teaching. They are not there to look after the social requirements of the children as their first priority. And therefore a lot of outside organisations are making demands of teachers which puts pressure on the teachers themselves. So it is about getting the mix right.

Hon Kennett is definitely committed to the cause of depression. I am thoroughly convinced that we, the young people in the society, too can make a difference to the lives of our friends and school/work colleagues suffering from depression. I suppose all that it takes to make a beginning is an interest in the welfare of the people who need our understanding. A little listening and a friendly talk costs nothing but might save a young person's life!

beyondblue: the national depression initiative can be contacted on 03 9810 6100 or by email: bb@beyondblue.org.au or see the website www.beyondblue.org.au

Hot on the heels of the Spring Racing Carnival and the recent State Government campaign on problem gambling, a preventative education kit has been launched to counter gambling-related problems among apprentices and young workers in the Victorian construction industry.

Construction industry redundancy fund Incolink has developed the problem gambling kit in a community partnership with the Victorian Government and Gambler's Help after it commissioned the study into the extent of gambling and problem gambling among young people in the construction industry.

The *You Bet* kit, includes a DVD, information cards and booklet with advice and tips on identifying and tackling problem gambling,

In addition to apprentices and young construction industry workers, the kit is aimed at employers, site officials, teachers, and fellow workers.

Incolink CEO John Glasson said the DVD told a typical story of a young industry worker with a gambling problem: "It is designed to show how simple it is to fall into the trap of problem gambling and to highlight the telltale signs for both the young people and the people around them - friends, family, fellow workers, site officials and employers.

"It provides contact details of organisations, such as Gambler's Help, that people can turn to for assistance. It will be distributed through TAFEs, training groups, employer associations and unions."

The research behind the resource kit

A sample of 272 apprentices and young people aged 18 to 24 years from TAFE institutions across Melbourne were surveyed by Incolink and RMIT University, with a questionnaire measuring a range of information.

The survey found high rates of gambling and gambling-related problems, particularly on social games such as pool and billiards, as well as horse and dog racing

and casino table games. Some 16%, or 44 people, identified themselves as having a gambling problem:

- spending money set aside for bills, food or rent
- skipping work to gamble
- lying about their gambling
- borrowing money to gamble

"The rate of help seeking was low and, importantly, rather than being a positive influence, workmates and older workers were a negative influence," Mr Glasson said. "They were more likely to continue or increase their problem gambling behaviour as a result of peer, social or workplace pressures.

The research also showed that the rate of regular gambling increases with each year of an apprenticeship. By the third year, more than half the apprentices are regular gamblers, and regular gamblers are at serious risk of developing gambling problems.

Other key findings included:

- 244 or 90% reported gambling in the previous year and 100 (37%) reported regular gambling in the same year
- 44 participants (16.2%) identified at least one gambling-related problem, with the most common problems among the entire sample being borrowing money to gamble, lying about the amount being gambled and gambling money meant for food, clothing or bills
- Seven per cent of gamblers, 12.3% of regular gamblers and 14% of gamblers with at least one gambling related problem reported influence of workmates

The Incolink-RMIT research findings are in line with the 1999 Productivity Commission national survey that indicated that young adults, aged 18 to 24 years, displayed a higher prevalence of regular (weekly) gambling compared to all other age groups.

For further info visit www.incolink.org.au

Behind Rainbow Eyes

BRE is a newly formed group whose aims are to promote awareness and acceptance of same-sex attracted youth in the community and schools across Australia. As an entirely youth run non-profit organization they will fill a gap in the youth sector where there is still a major lack of materials, information and support for GLBTI youth.

Michael Boucher, a member of BRE, was at the recent Schooling & Sexualities Conference. The conference identified that gay students are still suffering homophobic abuse, isolation from their peers, lack of support and many students contemplate suicide. The conference discussed the fact that there is an alarming lack of anti-homophobic programs being taught.

While some schools use some of the excellent resources that are available, (the national Talking Sexual Health program developed by LaTrobe University, state programs such as Shine in South Australia and work being done by Victoria's youth-based Rainbow Network), schools are not required to teach these programs. Many schools, both government and non-government, continue to resist the introduction of anti-homophobic bullying policies and sexual health education classes that incorporate GLBTI discussion.

Many presenters felt the problem was an absence of a national, compulsory program and the unwillingness of principals, politicians and parents to allow GLBTI issues to be raised formally in schools.

BRE hopes to change this. BRE has as part of its goals, to work towards introducing programs into schools to help combat the homophobia and lack of support that currently exists. As their first major project, they are bringing well-known US author for gay teens, Alex Sanchez, out to Australia to conduct a national speaking tour for youth, teachers, counselors and any other interested persons.

Alex has been described as "a writer who not only writes stories, but who

does so in a way that helps promote social justice" and he is quoted saying "I've discovered a function of my writing I never foresaw: as an agent of social change, able to inspire, empower and change lives." There is no doubt that Alex's writing has not only changed many lives, but will continue to do so.

"I had learned to believe that being gay was the worst thing in the world a boy could be. After school, alone in my room, I would tell myself, 'I'm not going to feel this way. I refuse to let this happen to me.' One of the places I 'escaped' to was our school library, which I estimate had several thousand volumes. How many of those books portrayed teens like me, struggling with identity and experiencing prejudice? Not a single one."

"Writing was a way to heal, to find my voice, to put on paper the story I wish I'd had when I was younger—a book that would've told me: 'It's okay to be who you are.'"

Alex speaks about his experience of growing up gay in the US as an immigrant from Mexico, what motivated him to write his books, how his books are acting as agents for social change in the US and internationally, and how each of us can make an impact to create a better world.

Alex will be hitting Melbourne on January 21, 2006.

Ticketing information available at www.rainboweyes.com.au

For further information on BRE please contact Michael Boucher at info@rainboweyes.com.au



Whats the deal?

Looking for ways to teach young people about the law, their rights and obligations? A new resource is available. And it's free.



What's the deal? Educating young people about legal issues was developed by Youthlaw and Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) to assist teachers and community workers to get young people thinking about the law and how it affects them. The kit was developed after consulting with young people and educators about the legal issues that were most relevant to them. The kit extends VLA's *Am I Old Enough?* publication by providing a range of activities that bring the law to life. The kit is also mapped to the Victorian Education Learning Standards (VELS) so is one of the first resources that can be used with the new school curriculum

What's the deal? is targeted at people working with young people aged between 14-16 years. The issues tackled in the kit are particularly relevant as young people in this age group are becoming more independent, starting out in the workforce, embarking on relationships etc and so are more likely to come into contact with the law.

While providing legal information, the kit also invites young people to think critically about the law and debate legal issues with their peers. By engaging young people in discussions about legal issues, the kit aims to increase knowledge and skills and help young people to recognise and respond to legal problems.

The kit has four modules: Authority (police and ticket inspectors); My Body (sex and gender identity, pregnancy); When Things Hurt (discrimination, sexual harassment and vilification and violence) and Becoming Independent (getting job and leaving home). The modules can be adapted to a variety of educational settings to meet the learning needs of the young people you work with.

You can see the kit at www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/upload/what_deal.pdf and order it by phone 9269 0223 or email whatsthedeal@vla.vic.gov.au

AFL takes tough stance on Sexual Assault

Following a spate of allegations in recent times linking AFL players (and those from other codes) with the sexual assault of women, the AFL recently released a new policy document aimed at combating sexually abusive behaviour at all levels of the game.

The policy, *Respect and Responsibility*, aims to create a safe and inclusive environment for women at all levels of Australian Football. The policy was launched recently at Telstra Dome by the Minister for Women's Policy, Minister Delahunty. "Improving women's safety is everyone's responsibility and the Government is encouraged that the AFL, as a highly influential organisation, is serious about the issue," Ms Delahunty said.

AFL Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Demetriou said the release of the policy was the culmination of many months of work by a committed group of experts from a range of fields including women's policy, policing, the law, discrimination, equal opportunity and public health.

Key elements of the policy, which was developed in conjunction with the Victorian Government's Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault and the Office for Women's Policy are:

- Introduction of model anti-sexual harassment and anti-sexual discrimination procedures across the AFL and its 16 clubs
- Development of organisational policies and procedures to ensure a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for women
- Changes to AFL rules relating to conduct unbecoming which cover the specific context of allegations of sexual assault
- Education of AFL players and other club officials with avenues for dissemination of the program to the community level being explored
- The dissemination of model of

policies and procedures at the community club level

- Development of a public education campaign

With the majority of sexual assault reports coming from young women, the Youth Affairs Council is very supportive of the AFL measures. YACVic recognises the tremendous influence Australian Football has in the community and sees these measures as a positive step in sending a message to perpetrators that sexual violence is not acceptable.

Mr Demetriou announced that a working group had been established to continue to provide advice on the implementation of the policy.

Georgie Ferrari is a member of the Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault.

Discrimination—the Australian way

An opinion by Carmel Guerra

Complaints of religious discrimination have doubled in the past year from 51 complaints in 2003/04 to 106 complaints in 2004/05.

This new information released by the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria signifies that the introduction of laws and the debate around terrorism and ethnicity is having an effect on a large number of Victorians.

Our extensive work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) young people backs up this information. We have found that recently they are feeling increasingly targeted and fearful that the wider community doesn't understand them. For example, young women from the northern suburbs of Melbourne are scared to travel into the city. The short trip from Preston, Coburg or Brunswick is one they won't do alone.

Multiculturalism has always represented

a good news story in Australia; a point of harmony, celebration and understanding. Rather than creating a "melting pot," multiculturalism acknowledges the strength and richness of diversity and allows people to take pride in who they are.

Wearing a hijab, for example, should not be seen as a point of dissension. It's about a woman having the freedom to choose to wear a headscarf, just as a man may choose to wear a crucifix or a yarmulke as a legitimate form of religious expression.

With discussions in the media and comments by some politicians referring to a proscribed notion of "Australian values," it is important we engage in this debate and ask—what are "Australian values"? And who are the "We" that is being alluded to? Constructing myths about a homogeneous Australian identity has the effect of marginalising some of the most vulnerable groups in our community.

Reported attacks against Muslim women in particular is a tragic consequence of a debate that is not adequately embracing the concepts of multiculturalism that have been celebrated in Australia for so long.

The tragedy of the current debate is that it further diminishes people's ability to feel proud of their background and identity. Pushing young people and CLD communities further to the margins, as recent debate and policy has tended to do, will only reduce their capacity (and willingness) to apply their resilience, strength and resourcefulness to the economic and social well-being of the country.

Carmel Guerra is the Director of the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.

YOUTH ROUNDTABLE – a circle to nowhere?

Since 1996 the Howard Government has systematically eroded the rights and opportunities young people have to participate in the Australian democratic system and the ability for others to represent young people on their behalf. The most recent instance of this is the Government's decision to exclude Tasmanians from the National Youth Roundtable and reduce the number of young people it consults with in this formal mechanism.

Following the decision to abolish funding to the federal youth peak body - the Australian Youth Policy Action Coalition (AYPAC) - in 1999 by the then Minister for Youth Affairs, David Kemp, there has been no body that advocates the specific interests of young people, youth workers and youth organisations at a federal level. It has been left to the state's youth peak bodies - funded by state governments - to do all the necessary work.

Since then, the Howard Government has continuously resisted the many calls for the establishment of an independent Commissioner for Children and Young People made by youth workers, state peak bodies, academics, the Federal Opposition and the Australian Senate (in the Forgotten Australians inquiry, the Senate Committee for Community Affairs called for the establishment of a National Commissioner for Children and Young People).

Representation of youth by youth matters. Most would agree that young people have important contributions to make to society. As young people are not allowed to vote, they should be formally consulted. As with all constituencies, this must happen on a formal basis in order to have credibility and efficacy.

The key consequence of the Government's decision to abolish AYPAC is it is no longer accountable for its decisions to young people under the age of 18. Being unable to vote, young people now have no way to formally participate in the Australian political system. The lack of a peak body or commissioner for Australian youth below voting age means they have virtually no input into Government policies that directly affect them.

This is an absurd situation, and public policy suffers as a result. Youth are the main recipients of secondary and tertiary level education, are the exclusive beneficiaries of certain payments intended to help them study, are employees and sometimes even employers, as well as the target audience for various 'education campaigns' conducted at enormous expense to the taxpayer.

It stands to reason that federal education policy, youth income support payments, industrial relations changes and campaigns to make individuals and societies safer and happier could be improved by articulate and thoughtful youth.

After the Government defunded AYPAC in 1999, it established the National Youth Roundtable as its method of consultation with young people. The Roundtable has brought together 50 young people every year for the past 5 years at the relatively low cost of \$500,000 a year.

This year the Government has halved the number of new participants to the roundtable, the only mechanism for young people to consult with the Government. This is a very regressive step. There are thousands of young people in Australia who have valuable contributions to make and yet the Howard Government insists on reducing the number of young people it will consult with.

With 450 applications for the Roundtable in 2005, there is undoubtedly interest from young people, yet the Government insists on reducing the number from 50 to 30 as 'fifty is a little unwieldy' according to the manager of the Youth Bureau.

No more 'unwieldy', or problematic, than the 150 members of House of Representatives, surely?

Even when young people are selected for the roundtable they are not able to fully express their views. In 2004, not one agenda item set by the Government discussed issues that young people often feel most strongly about - war, terrorism or refugees.

The absence of both a federal peak body and commissioner for children and young people points to an attempt by the

Howard Government to silence the voices of young people and those speaking on their behalf. Young people hold a unique position within Australian society and face unique challenges.

While they may be seen to have more opportunities than any generation before them, they also face unprecedented challenges. Alarming rates of young people suffer mental health problems, have no home and no job—a sobering fact about the generation which is said to have benefited from so many advances, both socially and technologically.

These are the challenges facing young people and every effort should be made to solve them. These efforts, if they are to be most effective, must involve young people.

It is time to recognise that young people need an effective way to communicate their needs and ideas to the Federal Government. This must be done through more than just a shrinking roundtable: it must involve a peak body and a commissioner.

It is time for the Howard Government to begin valuing young people's views on society's challenges, and establish innovative and inclusive means for young people to get their views across—not limit them. Ensuring the wellbeing of Australia's young people ensures the wellbeing of Australia's future.

Luke Bo'sher is a YACVic member and currently studies at ANU.

Opinion pieces published in Yikes are not necessarily the views of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. YACVic invites YIKES readers to submit opinion pieces for consideration for future issues of YIKES. Email info@yacvic.org.au for details.

Below is an update of some of the latest happenings in the area of policy in youth affairs.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES BILL

Since 2002, the Victorian Child Protection system has been under examination and review. YACVic has participated in several consultations as part of this review, and submitted a written response highlighting the lack of attention to young people and their specific needs within the protection system. In early August a draft Children's Bill and White Paper were released.

The purpose of the bill is to update and combine the Community Services Act and the Children and Young Persons Act. The Office for Children conducted consultations and submissions were received in response to the draft Bill.

Some amendments were made to the Bill in response to that consultation process, including the name of the draft legislation to the Children, Youth and Families Bill. The new Bill outlines initiatives to substantially change the Child Protection system in Victoria including a new community based intake system, a new focus on young people's needs upon leaving care, therapeutic treatment orders for 10-14 year olds displaying sexually abusive behaviours and provisions to transfer responsibilities for Indigenous children, young people and families to the heads of Indigenous Agencies.

The legislation has been passed by the Lower House of Parliament and was introduced to the Upper House in late October.

CHILD WELLBEING AND SAFETY BILL

Submitted to Parliament alongside the Children, Youth and Families Bill was the Child Wellbeing and Safety Bill. This bill contains details of the role of the Child Safety Commissioner, the Children Service Coordination Board and the Victoria Children's Council. See YACVic's submission in response to both bills on our website.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING LEGISLATION

In March this year the State Government released a *Review of Education and Training Legislation Discussion Paper*, outlining a review of fifteen pieces of legislation relating to education and training in Victoria in a bid to develop updated and streamlined education and training legislation for Victoria.

Submissions were taken in response to the discussion paper and have been considered by Government. A White Paper of the review was released in September this year, outlining the outcomes of the submission process and what the Government now intends to include in the new legislation.

The proposals relate to affirming the principles of free instruction, education and training institutions operating within democratic principles and secularity in Government schools. Other provisions relate to maximising choice for parents within the government school system, the provision of school performance information and introducing a new common regulatory regime for all Victorian schools.

A copy of the White Paper can be downloaded from the Department of Education and Training Website on www.det.vic.gov.au and YACVic's response to the discussion paper is available on our site.

YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY

In August, VicRoads released the *Driver Safety and Graduated Licensing Discussion Paper*. The paper outlined the importance of improving young drivers safety in Victoria and some proposals that the Government has been considering to achieve that.

The proposals included extending the period required to hold a Learners Permit to one year in which 120 hours of driving practice must be completed and a new graduated licensing structure in which a Probationary licence holder completes a P1 and P2 stage over 4 years. YACVic worked collaboratively with VicRoads and the Office for Youth to consult with young people in the inner city and Horsham about the proposals.

The consultations formed the basis of YACVic's submission in response to the discussion paper. Submissions closed on the 11th of November. See YACVic's submission on our website.

NEW STATE GOVERNMENT YOUTH POLICY FOR VICTORIA

The Social Development Committee of Cabinet met on Monday 14 November and endorsed a submission from Department for Victorian Communities proposing the concept of a refreshed youth policy for Victoria and a consultation process to progress its development.

The Office for Youth are in the process of planning a consultation process that is to potentially roll out in two stages from December 2005 to March 2006.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE EDGE

YACVic's much anticipated report *Snapshots from the Edge: Young People and Service Providers on the Urban Fringe of Melbourne* has been released. The report draws on previous research and consultations with young people and youth service providers in the Interface local government areas of Melbourne, to paint a picture of some of the experiences and issues on the urban fringe. The report focuses on six key issues commonly raised in YACVic's consultations:

- Planning, infrastructure and the funding of services on the urban fringe
- The accessibility, frequency and cost of public transport
- Human service needs on the fringe
- The accessibility of mental health services
- Housing and homelessness
- Education and employment

The report can be downloaded from the YACVic website.

Jen Rose, YACVic's Policy Officer can be contacted on 9267 3799 or by email jrose@yacvic.org.au

STORIES OF DIVERSITY

Review by Georgie Ferrari

Test Pattern – Platform Youth Theatre, written by Angus Cerini, directed by Nadja Kostich.

Platform Youth Theatre is a youth arts company based in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Platform have been producing high quality, youth led theatre for Melbourne audiences since 1998 and their latest offering, Test Pattern, is no exception.

The first thing that struck me about this performance was the set design (by Marg Horwell). While simple and uncomplicated, the use of sheer curtains of hanging threads transformed the dusty old church hall into a beautiful, enticing and visually stimulating environment for the full 80-minute production. A clever use of video images, lighting and sound perfected the atmosphere and provided an excellent background for Platform's talented young players to strut their stuff.

Right from the start this play engages the audience and take us on a haphazard, bumpy, humorous, challenging, at times disjointed and confusing ride through the lives of 12 characters. These 12 exist in their own worlds, but interact with each other at points throughout the performance. Some of the stories are obviously part biographical and have developed from extensive workshopping and story telling. Others tell stories of people the players perhaps know or have observed in their surroundings.

Whatever the case the stories are told with an honesty and eagerness that demonstrate the cast's commitment to their art and to conveying their message.



Reflecting the diversity of the suburbs that feed the Theatre group, the Platform troop is a diverse mixture of cultures, socio-economic backgrounds and abilities. The play's content reflects the diversity of its cast with moving stories of migration and attempted assimilation, a poignant rendition of Robbie Williams' "A Better Man" by a young man with a disability and a hilarious camp dance by one of the actors who's blurb in the program reads: "...Omar is incredibly amazingly talented as you will see when he dances. He has the PERFECT waist and the PERFECT ass. He looks really good in hot pants..."

Test Pattern ran from October 26 to November 5.

Check out future performances of Platform Youth Theatre at www.pyt.org.au

communityprinting

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After spending 25 years in the community sector in particular as founder of Breaking the Cycle, a national employment initiative for at risk young people, Paul McKessy appreciates as much as anyone how difficult it is to run organisations on a tight budget.

Through this involvement Paul combined resources and experience with Hank Rosens to create Community Printing. The company is committed to providing not-for-profit organisations with a minimum of 5% savings on their marketing and printing costs!

How do they do this? By working in cooperation and partnership with your organisation, they assist in determining your previous expenditure, which in turn enables them to reduce your costs or pay you the difference themselves...it's as simple as that!

In addition, Community Printing offers networking opportunities between the community sector and it's corporate clients.

They donate 2 percent of their total revenue to the community sector and actively encourage their corporate clients to get involved in community partnerships in a way that benefits everyone.

If you are interested in saving your organisation money contact Paul on paul.mckessy@communityprinting.com.au for assistance with any printing, design and website requirements.

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THE PRINTER OF CHOICE FOR
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AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

State Government

YOUTH MENTORING GETS A BOOSTS

More young people in Victoria will receive mentoring, thanks to a \$2.9 million boost for youth mentoring programs in isolated and disadvantaged areas across the State.

On 27 October the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, Jacinta Allan, launched *Leading the Way: The Victorian Government's Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People*

2005-2008. The framework will guide the way Government agencies and the community deliver mentoring for young people in the State.

Community agencies with experience in mentoring will receive funding to help young people reach their full potential by getting help and advice from someone more experienced.

Mentoring can lead to better levels of school attendance, completion of educa-

tion and training, employment, improved self-confidence and better relationships with family and friends.

The funding comes from *A Fairer Victoria*, the Bracks Government's social policy statement to reduce disadvantage.

Copies of *Leading the Way* are available by calling (03) 9208 3198 or at <http://www.youth.vic.gov.au>



Entertainment provided by Ms Jade Leonards Mentored through FReeZACentral



Ms Susan Hinton from Vic Uni speaking about her mentoring experience through eZine (youthcentral)

FIRE SAFETY ON THE ADVANCE

Advance and the Country Fire Authority have received a Highly Commended Certificate in the Partnerships Award, Fire Awareness Community Service Awards 2005, for their Youth Education Partnerships Package.

Through the program, young people from schools delivering Advance in partnership with the CFA across Victoria are learning about fire safety and getting involved in their community.

At the same time they are gaining recognised and accredited skills in a range of areas around fire and emergency management, including First Aid and Incident Management, and they receive an Australian Fire Authorities Council

(AFAC) qualification when they complete the program.

The program engenders confidence, teamwork and leadership in the young people participating, with great outcomes for them, their schools, communities and the CFA.

Advance is a Victorian Government initiative to increase young people's participation in the community. The joint program with CFA, which involves young Victorians in spreading the word about fire safety, was highly commended at the 2005 Fire Awareness Community Services Awards.

The program gives students an opportunity to get involved and make a valuable contribution to their community by teach-

ing fire safety to the students who then go out with Brigade members to run safety sessions in local primary schools.

In 2004, 28 schools were working with CFA through Advance. Many of these schools are in rural areas where fire awareness is very important.

The annual Fire Awareness Community Service Awards, sponsored by the RACV, publicly acknowledge the great work and initiatives of individuals, groups and organisations in reducing the incidence and impact of fire in Victoria.

For more information about the Advance program visit www.youth.vic.gov.au, following the 'programs' and 'Advance' links.

Up Coming

CONFERENCES

LEARNING CHOICES EXPO 2006

When: 24–25th May

Where: Maroochydore, Queensland

The Expo brings together 500 teachers, principals, coordinators, youth workers, policy folk and researchers from across the country who are passionate about diverse ways to engage young people in meaningful learning—particularly young people whose needs are not able to be met in traditional classrooms settings.

The Learning Choices Expo features an impressive range of experts in delivering workshops, facilitating 'fierce' conversations and offering professional development opportunities across three themes 'Practice and Programs', 'Research and Policy' and 'Indigenous' education.

Early Bird Registration Rate of just \$480 by Friday December 9th, 2005.

For more info and check the website http://www.dsf.org.au/learningchoices/expo_2006.php

GENOPOLIS Y

When: 18–19 February 2006

Where: Melbourne

Who: 18–28 yrs

Genopolis Y is an international conference, convened by the Victorian Government, focussing on the role of young people in creating the sort of cities they want to live in 20 to 50 years hence. The outcomes of the conference will be captured and fed into Government policy makers, community groups and academia, as well as form major input into the subsequent "People In Place. Creative Cities" conference (www.pip06.com).

The conference program has been designed to enable the free flow of ideas and interaction through highly interactive sessions with discussion starters to kick them off, and moderators to bring the discussion together. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences is what will make this conference different. Themes include: the secret life of cities; places to create and express; virtual places—growing up digital; creatively learning; creative entrepreneurship;

places to experiment; spaces for risk; traveller's tales and creative travel; urban tribes, global culture; the cities Generation Y will create.

For info please contact conference directors on 9329 8411 or email info@GenopolisY.com or check www.GenopolisY.com

GRANTS

NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK 2006

When: 1–9 April

Grants of up to \$5,000 are now available for local events and activities celebrating National Youth Week in 2006. This is a great opportunity for young Victorians to get involved.

The grants are available to groups of young people who are supported by local governments, not-for-profit organisations or their school. The funding will support National Youth Week activities and events that are organised by young people for young people in their local community.

For the first time in Victoria, National Youth week will be a tripartite initiative supported through the Victorian Government, VicHealth and the Australian Government.

For more information please visit www.grants.dvc.vic.gov.au or contact Susanne Wells on (03) 9208 3205.

CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIPS 2006

Closing date for applications February 28th 2006.

Churchill Fellowships are awarded yearly to Australian Citizens by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. A Churchill Fellowship is an award of an opportunity, through the provision of financial support, to enable Australian citizens from all walks of life to travel overseas to undertake an analysis, study or investigation of a project or issue that cannot be readily undertaken in Australia. Currently the average Fellowship value is \$25,000.

Previous Churchill Fellowships have been awarded to people who have wanted to study new developments in aged care, children's services, mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, work-

ing with young people and many other important issues. The experience of many Fellows has strongly influenced the development of new services and policy directions. The Churchill Fellowship offers a unique opportunity for individuals to undertake significant overseas study to improve the Australian community.

For further information or inquiries you are welcome to contact: Netty Horton 0419 501 302 or go to the website www.churchilltrust.com.au.

YACVic's Young Media Spokesperson



Meet **Cheryl Naik**, YACVic's new Young Media Spokesperson. For more information see page 8, and page 16 for her interview with Jeff Kennet talking about Depression and beyondblue.